## 4. SUSTAINING COLLABORATION BETWEEN SECONDARY AND POSTSECONDARY FACULTY

### The Problem

To create articulated course sequences and other secondary-postsecondary linkages, high school and college faculty must work together and learn from each other. Too often, efforts to develop articulation agreements are designed as short-term events--for example, two or three meetings with teachers from a narrowly defined occupational area. These short-term interactions are usually inadequate to foster meaningful or ongoing interaction among faculty at different levels. They also fail to provide opportunities for joint curriculum development efforts or cross-level professional development.

### The Strategy: Curriculum Design Teams

Standing faculty groups that meet routinely can help to bridge the gaps between secondary and postsecondary teaching and forge useful professional relationships. Curriculum design teams have been implemented in the Mid-Willamette Education Consortium based in Salem, Oregon. These teams consist of secondary and postsecondary faculty volunteers from similar vocational-technical areas and, sometimes, from academic subjects. The teams determine their own schedule of meetings, the number of subcommittees needed to work on special topics or tasks, and the meeting agendas. Most teams meet several times each year; some meet every month. They receive administrative support and guidance from a "2+2" coordinator from the community college, who notifies team members of upcoming meetings, prepares written agendas, and provides information on relevant consortium, regional, and state activities and efforts.

### Advantages and Benefits

In addition to facilitating initial articulation agreements, secondary-postsecondary curriculum teams that continue to meet over an extended period can:

- Promote comprehensive cross-level curriculum planning
- Reduce feelings of isolation among teachers, particularly those at the secondary level
- Offer natural opportunities for informal and formal staff development by career area
- Provide a systematic mechanism for updating articulation agreements when course materials change, or for broadening agreements to include course sequences rather than only individual courses

### Implementation Challenges

Administrative support and resources are necessary to set up and facilitate the meetings and conduct follow-up activities. Additional resources may be needed for teacher release time.

## SUSTAINING COLLABORATION BETWEEN SECONDARY AND POSTSECONDARY FACULTY

Articulated programs of study are an important component of Tech-Prep. A common approach to developing these programs of study is for secondary and postsecondary occupational teachers to come together briefly to identify overlaps in the competencies covered in their respective curricula. The teachers then revise and link specific courses, formalizing their efforts through articulation agreements. However, systematic attention to keeping these agreements current is also important. Articulated courses and programs should be reviewed and updated periodically to ensure that they reflect changing technology and workforce needs, new industry skill standards, revised state curriculum frameworks, and the availability of improved course materials. Without a routine mechanism for making these changes, secondary and postsecondary articulation components can become misaligned and the agreements themselves obsolete. A comprehensive articulation process requires ongoing collaboration among faculty from different disciplines and levels.

Few consortia have established ongoing working groups of secondary and postsecondary faculty, however. Faculty groups convened for the purpose of articulation are frequently disbanded or cease meeting after completion of an agreement. Strategies and reasons for maintaining collaboration are not often considered when a signed course articulation agreement is the sole objective of secondary-postsecondary interaction. Although the lack of ongoing cross-level work groups may have few immediate consequences, leaders of some consortia feel that failure to sustain these groups may limit opportunities to improve curriculum integration and quality. Many consortium coordinators consider lack of substantive collaboration between secondary and postsecondary educators to be a serious obstacle to Tech-Prep implementation, even when they have successfully negotiated specific articulation agreements (see Silverberg and Hershey 1995).

## CURRICULUM DESIGN TEAMS

One approach to creating a structure for ongoing secondary-postsecondary collaboration is the curriculum design teams implemented by the Mid-Willamette Education Consortium (MWEC). This consortium is based in Salem, Oregon, and includes Chemeketa Community College and 22 school districts. With the college taking the lead, volunteers from the high school and college occupational faculties formed design teams beginning in the mid-1980s, and new teams continue to be established. Although the teams' initial objective was to develop course articulation agreements--and to align and revise curricula, as needed--institutional support has allowed and encouraged the teams to assume other continuing and related responsibilities.

Curriculum design teams in the Salem consortium have been formed around both narrowly defined occupational areas and broad career clusters. Initially, the teams were structured to represent the occupational programs offered at the college. More recently, the consortium formed teams to work on curriculum issues related to the six career pathways or clusters defined by the state (the focus areas for Certificates of Advanced Mastery--CAM) and being developed in consortium schools. In some instances, broader career cluster teams have absorbed several more-specialized teams of earlier origin; in other cases, both the broad and more narrowly defined teams continue to meet. For example, the MWEC design teams currently include:

Occupation-Specific Design Teams

- Automotive
- Drafting
- Manufacturing
- Computer Science
- Electronics
- Construction
- Accounting
- Education
- Fire Protection
- Office Occupations
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Health Services
- Journalism
- Visual Communications
- Early Childhood Education

Career Cluster Design Teams

- Industry and Engineering
- Natural Resources
- Business and Management
- Health Services
- Arts and Communications
- Human Resources

Teams or subsets of teams work on specific aspects of curriculum development. For example, they may define a new, higher set of entry-level competencies for college programs, or the prerequisite skills to be developed in "bridge" programs for adults or youths who did not acquire these skills in high school. There is also a counseling design team, whose task is to develop a standard set of sequential career development activities that will be implemented for all students regionwide.

The composition and size of the design teams vary. High schools that offer a vocational course in a particular program area are strongly encouraged to send representatives to the relevant design team, and most do. Teams representing vocational programs most commonly available in high schools--for example, drafting or office occupations--tend to be the largest, while design teams for newer or less common vocational programs--for example, health or visual communications--are smaller. Initially, the teams included only secondary and postsecondary teachers of occupational courses, but consortium staff have more recently encouraged the inclusion of academic teachers, particularly in the broader, career-cluster-oriented teams. Consortium staff reported that, at a recent meeting of the industry and engineering design team, more math and science teachers attended than vocational education teachers. In general, between 10 and 30 faculty members attend these design team meetings.

Responsibilities of the design teams are quite broad. Duties include:

- Developing new articulation agreements
- Reviewing and modifying established articulation agreements
- Defining course sequences that will provide a basis for career majors and the state of Oregon's Certificate of Advanced Mastery
- Designing new courses at the high school and college levels
- Updating curricula to reflect industry changes--for example, in technology or national certification requirements

The level of activity on these tasks varies across teams, however. Teams meet as often as once a month or as infrequently as twice each year (see Attachment 4.1). Meeting frequency is determined largely by the participants and depends on their interest in developing their working relationships and the perceived need for curriculum changes. For example, the electronics industry is undergoing rapid changes in technology; therefore, the electronics design team has been meeting often. An illustrative list of design team meetings and their agendas for the 1994-1995 school year is included in Attachment 4.2.

The design teams also serve a unique staff development function. Not only are team members able to share relevant information and ideas among themselves, but the consortium can take advantage of design team meetings to provide additional training by career area. Several of the MWEC teams have begun to hold their meetings at work sites, to offer faculty exposure to the technical and general requirements of employers in their particular industry or set of occupations. For example, the early childhood education design team met last year at the child care center for Nike employees in Portland. In addition to a tour of the facility, faculty were able to talk with the center's employees, asking questions about the entry-level skills needed for that field, the challenges employees encounter, and the work-based learning opportunities that might be available for MWEC students. Similarly, the auto design team has met regularly at work sites, including a tire shop and service center.

The arrangements, reminders, and followup for design team meetings are handled by a Tech-Prep 2+2 coordinator. This staff person, housed in the consortium's office at the community college, is responsible for scheduling the meetings, finding work sites that will host them, mailing out reminders and agendas, and gathering relevant material. In addition, the 2+2 coordinator acts as a liaison between the teams and the consortium--providing information to the teams regarding state education policy and upcoming consortium activities. This staff position, which provides both administrative support and direction, is critical to the maintenance of the teams.

## ADVANTAGES AND BENEFITS

Establishing standing groups of faculty that meet routinely clearly facilitates interaction and information sharing. The extent to which this interaction occurs and the types of information exchanged depend on the faculty involved and the support the consortium provides. Design teams can offer:

- A convenient and responsive forum for revising curricula and articulation agreements to reflect changes in textbooks or technology
- Ongoing opportunities for faculty to work on curriculum integration within career areas, developing special projects and course units that emphasize for students the linkages between their secondary and postsecondary educational programs and between academic concepts and occupational skills
- Improved mutual understanding of the roles of secondary and postsecondary as well as academic and vocational faculty
- Reduction in feelings of isolation and improved morale among teachers, particularly those at the secondary level, some of whom report feeling more "professional" or having more status through the interaction with postsecondary colleagues
- A cost-effective method for formal and informal staff development and workplace exposure by career area

## IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

Resources can be a significant barrier to maintaining secondary-postsecondary faculty collaboration through the design team approach. Having a staff person who can provide necessary administrative assistance and guidance is key to the continuation of the meetings, at least in MWEC. High school teachers and college instructors often do not have the time or access to telephones and copying machines to schedule meetings, send out mailings, or locate workplace hosts. In addition, funds may be necessary to pay for teacher release time to attend the design team meetings.

Even consortia with limited resources can foster ongoing cross-level faculty interaction, however. If the number of design teams is kept small, the time required for coordination is reduced, and it may be possible for existing staff to take on the task. Although MWEC has more than 20 design teams, other consortia may choose to form teams around only a small number of broad career clusters. Moreover, the

MWEC experience suggests that teachers do not always require release time to attend meetings. In fact, the consortium in Salem has been moving away from scheduling design team meetings during the school day, in part because teachers do not like to be away from their classrooms. Instead, team meetings have been increasingly scheduled after school, evenings, or even on weekends. The consortium has found that it is less expensive to pay for meals during these off hours than to fund substitute teachers. These shifts in meeting times have not affected attendance, according to the MWEC coordinator. The increasing sense of group purpose and the desire to be involved in inevitable changes to their curricula have helped to draw faculty and other staff to the design team table. Consortia might consider initially scheduling day meetings and paying teachers' release time, but then gradually eliminating this option. This approach provides an early incentive for team members to participate and establish good working relationships, but then ensures that the design teams continue out of members' interest and enthusiasm for the endeavor, while reducing cost.

## ATTACHMENTS:

4.1 MID-WILLAMETTE EDUCATION CONSORTIUM: CALENDAR OF DESIGN TEAM MEETINGS FOR 1994-1995

4.2 MID-WILLAMETTE EDUCATION CONSORTIUM: DESIGN TEAM MEETING AND AGENDAS 94-95